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Two Men: A Meditation

TWO men went up into the temple to pray. . . ." —two men within our own lifetime. These two men were really the same man. The man who went to pray was the same; the occasions on which he went were different. And between the two occasions something catastrophic had happened to that man and to his world.

On the first occasion, some fifteen years ago, he wandered down the long cathedral aisle, under towering arches, until he came to rest before the altar, behind which arose a beautiful reredos at the centre of which was a cross whereon hung the crumpled figure of a man. He missed the meaning of it, though he was awed by the beauty of the place.

And "he stood and prayed thus with himself. . . ." And there is a gentle irony in Jesus' words. God was there, but far off; not something so tremendous as to change this man's point of view and redirect his course of action, but rather as a kind of backlog against future contingencies, as the guarantor of the comfortable organization of society which this man so easily enjoyed. God was not this man's chief concern; his chief concern was himself.

And he was quite satisfied with himself. He compared himself with other men, and felt justified in a glow of moral pride. He was so certain about himself because he was so mistaken about his real nature, because he had set himself so low a goal. He had never had a genuine religious experience and he did not know how searching, how severe, are God's demands on us men.

He was satisfied with his world. He had been successful in it, and he regarded this, in a way, as a mark of God's approval of him.

He was also satisfied with the world at large. He viewed accumulating events in Europe with some concern but he was convinced that they were none of our business and that this great and powerful nation could safely live in isolation from the rest of the world and its problems. And he was blissfully unaware of the profound spiritual crisis which had gripped our world.

He was a "good" man. But he had never met God and he did not understand his world: he could not even understand himself.

Then came Pearl Harbor, and his world began to

crumble; tragedy walked up his steps and into his own home. His only son volunteered, and with a quiet "Well, so long" was off to war. And two years later came the telegram, "It is with regret. . . ." And all night long he paced the floor, whispering over and over again, "My son, my son."

Then came the second occasion when he went into the temple to pray, this time feeling not alone but part of a great brotherhood of human suffering, the suffering of all those who had loved ones in the war. And once again he stood before the cross with its broken figure. And this time its meaning was clear; this is what our world does to God, and to his messenger and to his message. And some ancient Christian words burst on his mind like a rocket, "God so loved the world that He gave his only. . . son." Before he "stood and prayed thus with himself." Now he was kneeling humbly at the altar rail.

In that presence he became aware of many things unrealized before. He became aware of himself, what was his "real" nature; how selfish had been his purposes, how narrow his social vision, how limited his sympathies, and how by his own narrowness and selfishness he had helped to create the crisis which had taken the life of his only son. And he could only beat upon his breast, saying "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

He became aware of other things too: that somehow his son was with him, and his son's comrades, and then as always happens in the presence of God, everybody was there without any circle of exclusion because of some external "accident of antecedents." And he began to understand what Christianity meant by its insistence on human brotherhood, all mankind one family in God, members one of another so that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it. And he recalled the words of a great historian that the crux of the present world crisis was found in "the stagnation of the masses of the world," that for them life is one grim struggle for sheer survival, and there is a revolt today against this in the name of human dignity.

He became aware of these things, dedicated to them, taken possession by a living will, as iron is saturated by heat. And he knew he had some idea of

what Christianity is all about, and what Christ stands for in this world.

So this man found his cause. Before, he had been satisfied with himself. Now he was an uncontented character. "And nothing is more certain," said John Stuart Mill, "than that all human progress has been due to uncontented characters." Christ, the great disturber of our peace, had got his grip on this man.

"I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." And so it is, in many different ways, that the spirit of Christ enters into the hearts of men.

W. S.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Our relations with our friends and allies seem to get worse by the hour. Our nation has become more isolated morally than at any time in recent years. Some of the smaller Asian nations and, for special reasons, western Germany may remain close to us. Our new alliance established at Manila omits India, Burma, Indonesia and Japan. Japan herself, a nation which has been so central to American policy, is today more alienated from us than at any time since the war because of our hydrogen tests and the injury to her fishermen and the threat to her food supply. These have a symbolic meaning for the Japanese which has not entered our consciousness. In our frustration we deliberately snub France and our difference with the British is given special emphasis because of the contempt expressed so generally here for Mr. Attlee for the very things which have increased his popularity in Britain.

Some of these developments may have been made worse by the way in which our spokesmen speak and act but there is a very deep problem which may be explained as follows. Our friends in the non-Communist world do seem very often to be indifferent to the real menace of Communism. They often seize upon any excuse to avoid facing the implacable and aggressive nature of Communism. In this respect, there is probably a greater realism among us than in most other countries where increasingly there is prevalent a paralyzing neutralism.

But the other side of the picture is that, while we may be right about the real threat in Communism, we have allowed ourselves to become very single minded in our approach to it and we seem to other nations to overemphasize the military aspect of the problem Communism creates. Our friends and allies may have some illusions about Communism, but they do have a greater sense of the complexity of the power of Communism than seems to underlie our policy, or the speeches of our politicians. Let it be granted that Communism is strong, in part, because of the military power of Russia and China and because it is a ruthless and resourceful conspiracy. Yet, it would not have the power that it has if it could not still convince effective minorities in many countries that it has a solution for their problems.

Our friends recognized more clearly than we do the sterility of a purely military defense against Communism. They also realize better than we do that a

general war would be as self-defeating as it would be horrible. President Eisenhower seems to share this feeling but, so long as the opinions of Admiral Radford have influence in policy-making circles, it is difficult to know how reckless we may become. The face that we show to the world today arouses fear and suspicion rather than trust among those who should be our best friends.

There is a vicious circle here. The neutralist illusions in many other countries arouse frustration in us which causes us to become more rigid and more one-sided and this increases the neutralism in others. How can we come to a fresh view of the whole situation ourselves? How can we show a less repellent face to the world? The difficulty is that we are caught in a political situation which would make it political suicide for anyone except President Eisenhower himself to lead out in a new way.

Perhaps after the coming election there can be a real re-appraisal not only of our foreign policy but of the way Americans feel about the issues. One immediate goal should be the restoration of a spirit of mutuality in the exchange of ideas with other nations which are as much committed to freedom as we are. Our present isolation means that we see the world through fixed ideas which events do not change, that we are almost as much blinded by an ideology as the Communists. Perhaps, after the furor of the political campaign is over, ideas that have been expressed so well by the President about our relationship with our allies as that of a partner rather than a leader may come to have more influence on the spirit and the policy of our government than has so far been the case.

J. C. B.

Correspondence

Dear Sirs:

The article of Dr. Stewart Herman on "Twenty Years of Barmen" (July 26 issue) dare not pass in your pages without a word on the other side. Dr. Herman was helpful in showing how deeply the Christians in Germany long for true brotherhood, while they reject every false unity imposed from above. He was, however, unwise in basing his article only on the bitterly partisan thought of Propst Asmussen. As a result he missed the central point at issue, and gave several false impressions.

In the first place, it is a mistake to imagine that a party of Confessing Church "prophets," under Martin Niemöller, is prepared to throw over the traditional Lutheran, Reformed and Consensus Confessions for a kind of *ad hoc* unity based on the Barmen Declaration. The real issue is between those who, like Asmussen and Herman apparently, regard a long confessional statement as the absolute basis of a church—the test of its existence—and those who believe that the Church is founded on the word of God in Christ, to whom all confessional statements bear a relative witness in their time and place, instructing and guiding the faithful. The question at issue is whether or not the Evangelical Church in Germany is *one* church, based on the testimony of the whole Reformation to the word of God. Nothing

(Continued on page 128)

The Hungry Sheep Were Fed

METROPOLITAN JUHANON MAR THOMA

THE Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches is over and people are asking, "What do you think of it?" and, "How does Evanston compare with Amsterdam?" Such questions are natural, but puzzle the person who has to answer. Four years of study and two years of intense preparation are behind the Evanston Assembly, and if it has been only another meeting of nations and churchmen, a thousand pities.

This great Assembly once again brought together in prayer, study, and friendly discussion some theologians, church leaders and laity, who under normal circumstances would not have thought of meeting together in prayer or in a sharing of experiences. It has helped many to ask, "Why is it not always like this?" If the question has been seriously asked it is something for the good.

"Our oneness in Christ and our disunity as churches" was a subject studied at the Assembly. Sharp differences appeared in the course of the discussions. To some, disunity was sin. Others thought our separated churches have come into existence because our fathers stood for certain spiritual convictions, and to call that sin was something very offensive. An attempt to escape this difficulty was to differentiate between diversity and disunity. Here, one felt, was a good deal of rationalization, and a forgetting of the non-theological factors which have entered into our continuing to be divided. The sinfulness of the dividedness is not at all unilateral. Those who broke away from the traditions, and those who have allowed the breaking away both stand condemned in the judgment of God. On this point there was more or less agreement. The cry "faith and convictions of our fathers" may have an emotional value for churches in Europe and America, but it is meaningless to the churches in mission lands, to whom it has been exported. The faith of our fathers would mean only the worship of wood and stone, or the acceptance of some abstruse philosophical conceptions.

It was feared that the discussion of the main theme, "Christ, the Hope of the World," would lead to an eschatological controversy and create a division in the council itself. If there was such a possibility, the council has surely weathered the storm. Of course the tension between the hope here and now—the kingdom that now is—and the hope in the coming of Christ as judge—the kingdom that is to be—was quite evident. To those coming from the Eastern churches and from mission lands the fear of some theologians to speak of the coming of Christ in glory and to record it in the message and reports with the emphasis it deserves was quite disturbing. There is surely the danger of an other

worldly attitude developing if the hope is only a kind of emotional hungering for the coming of Christ. It might make us indifferent to realities. But there is another way in which the hope is entertained. The idea of "the pilgrim people" and the coming of Christ in glory as judge is the very basis of all hope in the here and now. Surely we are a pilgrim people and Christ will meet us at the end of our pilgrimage. He has promised to come and he has warned us that he will judge us asking of the cup of cold water and of our relationship to our neighbor. All endeavours for a better social order, all planning for a responsible society are work for the coming of the kingdom of God. Has he not promised for us a kingdom here and now to be perfected at his coming? In fact, the tension between the present hope and future hope only appears so. It is the result of a failure to grasp the fullness of the work of Christ and of the gospel message.

The Assembly message and the section reports may be condemned by some as theological compromises. A better way to state it would be that the reports and the message are characterized by comprehensiveness and an expression of the breadth and many-sidedness of the Christian hope, and the failure of man to express it in acceptable terms.

The decision to go forward together, and not simply to stay together, is to be received with joy. One has a deep sense of disappointment when one thinks of the Assembly and the communion at the Lord's table. At the Lord's table we still remain divided. That question did not receive much more attention here than at Amsterdam and Lund. The divisiveness of the World Council is to be feared, not over eschatological differences, but in the areas of church order and the sacraments. Perhaps here, too, there is a sign of relief. The communion service celebrated by the Protestant Episcopal Church was open to all communicant members of the World Council. It had not been at Amsterdam. The solution of the question of intercommunion must be approached from the angle of Canon Leonard Hodgson's suggestion. The value and virtue of the episcopal orders is God-given and according to the will of God in the one church, in its unity. Could the will of God be accepted differently in the divided state of the Church? More thinking has to be done along this line. The World Council of Churches is young as an organization. We must not look for astounding results in discussions in the spheres of church order and the sacraments. As far as it has gone it has given hope for the future.

What the Evanston Assembly has achieved can be judged only in the future. The Assembly has created an atmosphere and has given us visions. Very much

will depend on the way in which the delegates carry out in their regions and churches the spirit which sustained the assembly. Surely the discussions were on very high theological levels and the ordinary member of the congregation will consider it high-brow. It is the duty of the delegates and the member churches of the assembly to translate it into the levels of the work-a-day world in the spheres of our living together.

The Evanston Assembly is an event in ecumenical history. The Christian world has been looking towards it with hopes and doubts and fears. Truly, it could not be said of this assembly, "the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed." Hopes and fears are still with us. There are many unknown things in the future. But we know who is coming and that assurance sustains and revives our hope.

Poling and the Presbyterian Letter

EDWARD A. DOWNEY, JR.

IT MAY seem like gloom at a circus to raise seriously again the five-month-old question of Dan Poling and the Letter to Presbyterians. In days when papal encyclicals and even the words of Westbrook Pegler are identified as communist or pro-communist (the latter during a lawsuit by Pegler himself!), one is tempted to laugh and forget. The Presbyterian General Assembly did not take Dr. Poling's charges seriously, but roundly endorsed the Letter. A representative of *Presbyterian Life* who tried to discuss the matter with him, was rebuffed, and *Presbyterian Life* dismissed Dr. Poling with a dignified and decisive rebuttal. The *Christian Century* editorially endorsed the rebuttal.

But since Dr. Poling himself has repeated and amplified the charges in the August *Christian Herald*, I conclude that such circus antics are meant to be serious and should be dealt with. The hoax before four or five million *Post* readers is now presented to another public, together with "proofs" that teeter between the ridiculous and the dishonest. A third reply by *Presbyterian Life* is strong and clear but still does not demonstrate fully the character of Dr. Poling's attack.

In the *Saturday Evening Post* for April 24, Dr. Poling pictured himself with elaborate precision seated at his desk before two copies of the *Cominform Journal*, a central communist propaganda organ. "In the release of July third," he narrates, "I have underscored in red six sentences and, in the release of October 2 nineteen sentences or paragraphs, the *exact sentiment* and, in several instances, the *exact language* of which appeared in the Presbyterian Letter" (Italics added.) Dr. Poling noted that both issues of the *Journal* had been published prior to the Letter in buttressing his charge that:

"The sinister character of communist infiltration, and the uniqueness of its subversive apparatus when it moves in to receive the churches is found, as perhaps in no previous document, in this official letter."

"How, then," he asks, "do we explain the striking parallel . . . ?"

Then followed a nearly incomprehensible para-

graph in which it seemed almost that the communists, having "taken over phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from the soundly liberal releases of the ecumenical movement and from social action committees of Protestant denominations," were probably copying from the Presbyterians rather than vice versa. But by the end of the paragraph the original claim returned. This reader, at any rate, was now set for some documentation. Would the two sources be set side by side in parallel columns? Or would this well-known, crusading clergyman choose to cite the damning "language" and "sentiments" in deadly pairs?—first the Letter, then the *Journal*, so that such non-communist Presbyterians as there are would have the facts.

Dr. Poling's highly original method was the following. His next paragraph began:

The Presbyterian Letter contains such sentences as this:

"Truth is thus held captive in the land of the free. . . ."

And there the documentation stopped—absolutely and completely. The subject changed abruptly to other types of criticism of the Letter. Not so much as a syllable was quoted from the *Cominform Journal*, nor was a single phrase of the Letter identified as of communist origin. It is only by giving him the benefit of the doubt that one can say Dr. Poling offered even the sentence quoted above in evidence. And in the remainder of the article, he presented not one shred of supporting material for this most striking and easy-to-demonstrate of his charges.

II

Dr. Poling's new "answer," in the form of a letter to Robert Cadigan, editor of *Presbyterian Life* magazine, purports to offer the missing documentation. The method chosen was to give quotations in pairs from the two sources. The reader is urged to procure the *Christian Herald* for August and make his own study, lest he think the following incredible account is biased or exaggerated.

From the Presbyterian Letter, Dr. Poling put together an excerpt of nineteen words dissected from

pages 2, 6 and 8 for his first exhibit of a "striking parallel." I quote his entire treatment of the passage:

"The present situation demands . . . historical perspective. . . It (the church) is guided by the historical witness. . . History moreover makes it abundantly clear. . ." And now from the *Cominform Journal*, Page 3, October 2, 1953, in columns 2, 5, 6: "We are guided by this historic evaluation . . . despite all the imperialistic machinations it will fulfill its historic mission . . . in order successfully to fulfill its historic task."

For "exact language" we have before us the single word "historic." This is patently ridiculous.

The claim of "exact sentiment" disappears suddenly when we simply replace Dr. Poling's dots with the words he left out. On page 8 of the Letter we read (with the Poling excerpts italicized): "While we take all wise precautions for defense, both within and outside our borders, *the present situation demands* spiritual calm, *historical perspective*, religious faith, and an adventurous spirit." And the full statement from page 2 reads, "In doing so [i.e. addressing the church through this Letter] *it* [the General Council of the Presbyterian Church] *is guided by the historical witness* of our Church and the deliverances of successive General Assemblies." Why did Dr. Poling snip out the words "of our Church" — and then insert the term "church" wrongly after "it"? Was he trying to give the impression that the church is guided by some communist thing called "historical witness?" At any rate, the context makes a shambles of any claim to communist "sentiments." The third sentence appears in full in section III below, because Dr. Poling found it necessary to use that one twice.

Now for the context in the *Cominform Journal*. The words "this historic evaluation" refer specifically to a quoted statement of Stalin to the effect that the bourgeoisie sell the national independence for dollars! The other two phrases are pulled from an article by Wilhelm Pieck, describing the "historic task" of the East German government to create a communist utopia. Both contexts (need we add?) are completely unrelated to any part of the Presbyterian Letter. The Poling method hid the context of both quotations by cropping the sentences, then presented a completely innocuous one-word parallel. The result is so unrevealing that one wonders why he bothered. There is no "exact sentiment" here. If this be "communist infiltration," woe betide the next public orator who finds himself upon a "historic" occasion, or with a "historic task" to fulfill!

Next (for there are no omissions in my reproduction of this one column of parallels), we read a startlingly flat one-sentence indictment, unsupported by quotation: "Also there is the common use of the word 'inquisition' by both the Letter and the *Cominform Journal*." Need we say that the word is quite common and might come very easily to the mind of Dr. Mackay, author of the letter, as a specialist in

Spanish culture? Another alternative would be to regard Pope Gregory IX, founder of the Inquisition, as a forerunner of Marx.

Reviewing now the only other quotation that Dr. Poling cited with a parallel, and presenting his complete paragraph with his italics and dots, we have:

"The identical phrase, 'great vitality,' *as used*, is another instance. In 'A Letter to Presbyterians,' it appears in the sixth sentence of the fourth paragraph as follows: 'Communism, which is at bottom a secular religious faith of *great vitality* . . .' In the *Cominform Journal*, Page 1, October 2, 1953, appears the following: "The past four years have demonstrated to the entire world the *great vitality* . . ."

Here, for a moment, I was stumped, because the sentence did not appear among Dr. Poling's original underscorings, and because it is not conceivable that communists should refer to themselves as a "secular religion." But I sought and found! The sentence, from an article on China, with dots filled in, reads (I swear): "The past four years have demonstrated to the entire world the *great vitality* and strength of the People's Republic of China in all its greatness." This is not the phrase "great vitality" *as used*. The subject matter is completely different. Is Dr. Poling prepared to regard every use of the term "great vitality" as inspired by communist sources? Would he deny that the communist movement, spreading like a forest fire and endangering our culture and our faith, might be described as having "great vitality?" The unconcealed idiocy of this "documentation" under the name of a responsible churchman and editor boggles the imagination. One is embarrassed to have to point it out.

We have now quoted verbatim and supplied context for all the parallels in which Dr. Poling cited both sources. He claims to have in reserve "twenty-three instances" on "nine typed pages of material arranged in parallel columns" which "fully confirm" his charges. Having procured photostats of these pages and analyzed them carefully, I can assure the reader that their content is of the same, or poorer, quality than the material just cited. Curiously, only half of the material on these nine pages came from Dr. Poling's original underscorings — in fact, it was pieced together from *more than forty* places in the two *Cominform Journals*. One citation is assembled from four different points and shown as a single continuous quotation without benefit of hiatus marks. Such methods are impressive, but the impression they leave is not pleasant to contemplate.

The total of "exact language" (sic) consists of the words "historic," "inquisition," and "great vitality," and the like, all of which appear in a context (suppressed by Dr. Poling) that destroys the case completely. Knowing now of the existence of these irrelevant words in the two documents, and having examined both meticulously from end to end, I am

now willing to affirm categorically and without reservation that there is no "exact language" from the *Cominform Journal* quoted in the Presbyterian Letter. Not only is there no such "sentence or paragraph," there is no clause or phrase. Dr. Poling's citations prove nothing but that both documents were written in English. This charge is a complete, across-the-board falsehood for which in my opinion Dr. Poling, the *Christian Herald*, and the *Saturday Evening Post* owe public explanation to the Presbyterian Church. Even knowing the non-defensive posture of this good-gray denomination, and the trickiness of libel suits, one wonders why the church did not sue immediately. The only answer to the earlier refusal of Dr. Poling and the *Post* editors to produce the evidence requested and the only reason for the comedy of parallels now quoted is that there is in fact no valid evidence.

III

The one remaining quotation from the Letter by Dr. Poling deserves to be treated separately. We present it with his comment. He cited no parallels:

"Again, from the Presbyterian Letter: 'Ideas are on the march, forces are abroad whose time has come. They cannot be repressed and will bring unjust orders to an end. . . The transition to a better order will be gradual and constructive. . . History moreover makes it abundantly clear that whenever a religion, a political system or a social order does not interest itself in the common people, *violent revolt eventually takes place*.' These sentences, partial sentences or phrases appear on page 6 of the Letter, and all of these, in philosophy and theory, run through these two issues of the *Cominform Journal*. As you read them the parallels are unmistakable."

To begin, we must note a feature of this montage. Scissors were used. The first set of dots omits the naming of the "unjust orders," feudalism and imperialism. The words after the dots are the ragged end of a long sentence reading: "The real question is how to solve the problems presented by these two forms of out-moded society in such a way that *the transition to a better order will be gradual and constructive*." In the next sentence, Dr. Poling italicized the words "violent revolt eventually takes place." The latter might be an effort to make the Letter look as if it favored "violent revolt." If so, the idea was apparently strengthened by cutting out most of the preceding sentence which shows that the Letter is trying to avoid violence in favor of "gradual and constructive" improvement. Also someone with nefarious purpose could have enhanced the effect (as Dr. Poling did) by failing to follow through to the very next words: "On the other hand, just because God rules in the affairs of men, Communism as a solution of the human problem is foredoomed to failure."

There may be at this point in Dr. Poling's article, not pay dirt, but a little fool's gold that tempted the

prospector to think he had struck it rich. Students of social and of biblical thought have often pointed out that Marx's view of historical progress and inevitable destiny may represent a kind of secularized and inverted form of a biblical view of history; that is, a sense of movement, radical change, direction and goal—a feeling for history scarcely found outside biblical religion—but with an absolute denial of God as the moving force. Economic forces alone are said to be causative. If there is any significant intersection between the two documents, it is in the parts where this moot but probable dependence of Communism upon a Christian understanding of history is traceable. This is comparable to saying that Marx could not have theorized as he did against a Hindu, Buddhist or classic Greek framework. The dependence, however, if any, is the exact opposite of what Dr. Poling claims. It is that of Marxism as a movement dependent upon the background of the culture in which it grew. But as a basis for suggesting a reverse dependence between these two specific documents, there is no ground whatever.

While these "unmistakable parallels" are in mind, and before showing the framework in which they stand in the Letter, we should be in a comparatively receptive mood for Dr. Poling's favorite paragraph from his young friend Herbert A. Philbrick:

"Whoever wrote the Presbyterian Letter talks like a Marxist and the pattern of thinking is Marxist. It (the Letter) consists almost entirely of pure communist dogma, adheres to the strict Party Line in both theory and in current propaganda. The terminology used was, in many cases, precisely correct to the eye of the communist propagandist."

Mr. Philbrick must have spectacles more splendid than the archangel gave to Joseph Smith to read thusly. His contribution is unsupported, except by the Poling material which we have already presented in full. We may gather therefore that the "terminology" used must be those fatal words "historic," "inquisition" and "great vitality." The alleged "dogma" shares the fate of the Poling "sentiments."

My own reading discloses that the *Cominform Journal*, a basic sheet for all communist publications in many languages, embodies fully the cant of the Communist Party line. It is a catalogue of the unrest and discord promoted in the world by international Communism together with endless vituperation heaped upon "capitalists," "bourgeoisie," "reactionaries" and American "war mongers," etc. etc. My reaction after reading the *Journal* issues was quick and lasting: if the Letter did represent such "sentiments" as characterize the *Journal*, it would require complete repudiation. In fact, the two could scarcely be more different. The main points of the Letter are the "prophetic function" of the Christian Church, "the preservation of the majesty of truth," and "God's sovereign rule [as] the controlling factor in history." For one example, we might draw on the

context of the words picked by Dr. Poling and quoted at the beginning of this section. The Letter insists that any effort to "impose upon society . . . a purely man-made order" will finally fail. "Any human attempt to establish a form of world order which does no more than exalt the interest of a class, a culture, a race, or a nation, above God and the interests of the whole human family, is foredoomed to failure." For a publication said by Mr. Philbrick to consist "almost entirely of pure communist dogma" I find the following amazing:

"Just because God rules in the affairs of men, Communism as a solution of the human problem is foredoomed to failure. No political order can prevail which deliberately leaves God out of account. . . Communism enslaves in the name of freedom. . . The Communistic order will eventually be shattered on the bedrock of human nature, that is upon the basic sins, and the abysmal needs, of man and society. For that reason Communism has an approaching rendezvous with God and the moral order."

Further, to see the violent revolutionary forces of our century, fascism and Communism, as a "judgment of God upon human selfishness," is to echo, not communist dogma, but the Old Testament prophets who saw idolatrous Babylon and Egypt as the rods by which God punished his people. A fair analysis of the Letter points to the prophet Amos and the Calvinist tradition as its most likely sources—plus Dr. Mackay's highly individual writing style and his yen for the not-so-radical T. S. Eliot. Or, as Dr. Mackay put it, "The Bible, the Presbyterian heritage of faith, and Christian common sense applied to the contemporary situation," are the sources. Not many who "talk like Marxists" affirm "God's sovereign rule" as the "controlling factor of history!"

It would seem that only a sensation-hunting imagination with a McCarthy-esque disregard for the intelligence of the reader would make such an assertion as Mr. Philbrick's. The least he can do now, to avoid appearing a fake is either to identify those "dogmas" and specify that "terminology" and "propaganda" or withdraw the flamboyant paragraph for what it is, a falsehood.

Three months ago, when I could not make sense of Dr. Poling's charges, I asked him to let me come down to his office and go over the documents with him that he might show me what I could not find myself. Dr. Poling simply shouted on the telephone, "You can't go over them with me!" (I shouted, too); and warned me not to "stick your neck out any more," until I should see his August article. Having seen the article, I went to re-check my notes on the call: *mirabile dictu*, it was my neck he referred to!

IV

The present article has never denied that the general debate about the Presbyterian Letter is a

large and legitimate one. The intent is solely to isolate the single factual issue of "exact language" and "exact sentiments," in the hope of having the charge either supported or withdrawn. One might find the entire letter scandalous and still see that this particular part of the two Poling articles is untrue. We have here a matter of fact, like that of the cropped photograph or the J. Edgar Hoover "letter" in the recent McCarthy-Army hearings, and partisans of both sides must bow to such facts.

As the matter now stands, Dr. Poling and the *Post* published charges without proof, and the *Christian Herald* has offered ludicrous "proof." The burden of it still rests with the author and editor. It consists of three tasks: (1) find the "exact language" and quote it; (2) discover and state the "exact sentiments"; and (3) demonstrate the communist character of either or both, if found. So far, Dr. Poling has failed in all three tasks. The latter demonstration is especially important because mere similarity of commonplace ideas does not establish dependence. For instance, the *Journal's* appeal to Thomas Jefferson in one case neither establishes nor negates any relation to others who also quote Jefferson. The fact that Soviet Russia seems now to be going prohibitionist does not mean that Dr. Poling, a former Prohibition party candidate for office, is a communist. The ideas must be specifically and significantly communistic for a case to be made.

It is my firm and considered opinion that the proper analysis of the particular charge at which this article is aimed—that of the direct influence of two issues of the *Cominform Journal* upon the Presbyterian Church's official Letter to its members—is as follows: the charge of "exact language" is completely false; that of "exact sentiments" is a completely misleading slander. Both charges are not only not provable, they are provably wrong.

One cannot help wondering whether falsifying was deliberate. Or could it be that Dr. Poling has not done this work himself? That was the case in the nineteen-forties when he publicly endorsed a book he had not read and now repudiates. But the scene at his desk, the personal underscoring, and the more recent answer would seem to imply first hand information this time. Mr. Philbrick may be playing a young Polonius to Dr. Poling's Hamlet: "Tis like a camel, indeed!" Or the roles might be reversed. Mr. Robert Fuoss, managing editor of the *Post* and a Presbyterian elder, in answer to my plea to spend at least a half hour personally comparing the documents, replied that he had spent far more than that and still agreed with Dr. Poling. We leave the question of responsibility here.

One thing should now be clear: A frank and open debate on the virtues and faults of the Presbyterian Letter will continue, but it need no longer suffer the effects of this particular journalistic punch below the belt.

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illustrates the point more clearly than the fact that Dr. Herman can discuss the whole question of the meaning of Barmen without once mentioning the word of God. Yet Barmen meant above all things, that the Church confessed Christ as God's only revelation and the only foundation of the Church, over against the Nazi religious authorities. It should not be surprising that those who took it seriously should confess the same thing over against any attempt to found the Church on one Confession.

In the second place, it is not true or fair to say that the Nazis made the quickest conquests where the "confessional" element was weakest, or that the united churches, especially the Old Prussian Union, are susceptible to dictatorship because they have no single confession. The truth would be that the Nazis conquered most easily where the *biblical* foundation of the Church was weakest, notably among liberals. There are indeed dictators in the German Church, but they belong to all confessions; they are not bred by any particular theology. And over against them, stands the most precious single gift of God's grace to the Church in the

whole Nazi period: the discovery of Christian community in the illegal Confessing Church, primarily in the Old Prussian Union. It is the power of this new sense of community, welling up from the whole membership of the Church, which is the great new spiritual fact in Germany, which Barmen symbolizes.

This, I believe, poses the real problem for the defenders of the old Lutheran-Reformed separation in Germany. Every creative movement in German church circles since the war has tended to confirm those Lutherans and Reformed who believe that the Evangelical Church in Germany is one. The evangelical academies have brought the Church into contact with all walks of secular life, but the abrasion of this contact has called all ethics borrowed from the 16th century—whether from Luther or Calvin—in question. It becomes ever harder to see why there should be a distinctively Lutheran or Reformed way of Christian life in a modern factory. The Kirchentag (yearly Church Festival) is profoundly biblical in its basis, but the quarter of a million people who attend it are seeking help for daily Christian living. Between the Bible and daily life, the distinctions of the 16th century theologians fade into the background, or in some cases they fructify, without dividing, the insight of the common fellowship. And so it goes elsewhere . . . even in theology itself, so far as it commends itself to the Church as a whole.

The guardians of the Confessions are understandably worried about all this. Does this activity show a proper respect for the truths enshrined in traditional theology? For due church order and authority? Asmussen and Herman reflect this anxiety, and it is indeed a proper concern to guard the Church against the impulse, above all the mass impulse, of the age. They would do well to realize, however, that it is we who are also being judged by the existence and spiritual power of this united Evangelical Church in Germany. Here in the United States it has not occurred to us even to question whether the ancient division of the Reformation into Lutheran and Reformed, is still valid. We do not even suffer pain that our Presbyterian and Lutheran communion tables are separate, and the latter at least, closed to the former. We continue shamelessly to build great confessional bodies, extending this questionable division around the world. When the time of our testing comes will we be better prepared for common Christian witness because the Confessing Synod met at Barmen in 1933? If we would learn its lesson before then, we had better begin now to let God show us that community of the Church under his word, which all the Reformers intended, and which has become a reality in Germany in the Nazi time and today. This is the real challenge of Barmen.

Sincerely,

CHARLES C. WEST

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